“Political Change in the Democracies of Europe and in the EU: Forms of government and party systems in the crisis years”

Classes: Wednesday 14-16, Thursday 15-17, Friday 9-10.
Teacher: Prof. Maurizio Cotta (cotta@unisi.it)
Office hours: Wednesday: 11-12; Thursday 11-12
Teaching assistant: Gianni Del Panta (jofplant@gmail.com)

Summary of the Course: The aim of the course is to understand in a comparative perspective how politics is changing in Europe. A short introduction on the comparative method will clarify why comparison stands at the core of political science, and illustrate the basic analytical instruments through which comparative research can be conducted. After this introduction the course will explore the theme of political change in Europe focusing on two fundamental elements which concur in defining the structure and functioning of democratic regimes: the form of government and the party system. We are particularly interested in evaluating to what extent the very serious and multiple crises which have deeply affected during the last years the European landscape have produced or concurred to stimulate changes on the two fundamental elements of the democratic system mentioned before.

The first module of the course will be devoted to discussing the main conceptual and empirical instruments for the analysis of forms of governments and party systems. In the second module the students will be asked to conduct an individual empirical research work on one or more cases and to write a paper on the topic assigned.

A first version of the students’ papers will be discussed in class and the final version of about 6000 words will be handed within two weeks after the end of the course.

Readings: the readings for the course can be downloaded from the website http://politica comparata.wordpress.com

Evaluation: During the first module of the course all students are required to prepare each week a written comment of about 350-450 words reflecting on two of the assigned readings. The comment is due at least 12 hours before the start of the Tuesday class of each week (IMPORTANT!! reaction papers have to be sent by email at both maurizio.cotta@unisi.it and jofplant@gmail.com as attached files, using the following filename: LastName_AssignN[number of the assignment]). In these short papers students need to demonstrate that they have read and thought about the reading material. Due to the structure of the forum absolutely no late work is accepted. We will on the other hand drop one of your lowest performing papers.

Attendance is compulsory. If you are unable to attend a class, make sure we know it before the class.

Grading for students who attend regularly:

a. For the first module:
   Participation in class  50%
   Reactions to readings  50%
b. *For the second module*
   In class participation and reactions to readings 40%
   Paper: 60%

The final evaluation will be based on the mean between the two modules.

*Students who for very serious reasons are not able to attend regularly* classes must communicate this to the Teaching Assistant *within the first week of the course*. A special program is available for them.

**Grading for irregularly attending students:**

c. *For the first module:*
   Oral discussion of the readings or book 100%

d. *For the second module*
   Paper: 80%
   Oral discussion of the paper 20%

The final evaluation will be based on the mean between the two modules

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**First Module: Concepts and theories**

**First week (Lectures 1-5; 4-6 October). Comparison and Political Science**

- Course presentation. Topics, Evaluation, Grading.
- Why comparing? Political science and the comparative method, How to compare. Quantitative and qualitative perspectives


**Second week (Lectures 6-10; 12-14 October). Institutions and Parties in Democratic Regimes and in Semi-democratic ones. Democracy in a supranational setting.**

- Defining democracy. The role of institutions and parties in liberal democratic regimes
- Democracy and hybrid regimes. The role of institutions and parties in hybrid regimes
- The special case of the EU: democracy in a supra-national setting


**Third Week (Lectures 11-15; 19-21 October). The analysis of Forms of Government I**

- The analysis of forms of government. What is it all about?
- Parliamentarism, Presidentialism and other forms of government.


Fourth Week (Lectures 16-20; 26-28 October). The analysis of Forms of Government II

- From the big picture to the details.
- Explaining the choices of the forms of government
- Discussing the consequences of different Forms of Government
- The form of Government in a supranational system: the EU case


Fifth Week (Lectures 21-25; 2-4 November) Parties and party systems

- The analysis of parties…
- …and of party systems


Sixth Week (Lectures 26-30; 9-11 November) Party systems continuity and change

- How party systems change
- Measuring party system change


**Exam Week**  (14-19 November) No lectures

**Seventh Week (Lecture 31-35; 23-25 November) Executives and Parties**

- Executives and parties in parliamentary regimes
- Executives and parties in presidential regimes
- Executive and parties in the EU


**SECOND MODULE**

**Eighth Week (Lectures 36-40; 30 November- 2 December)**

Individual assignments. Research questions. How to write a paper. Specific problems

**Ninth Week (Lectures 41-43; 7 December)**

Collection and presentation of basic information about institutional setup

**Tenth Week (Lectures 44-48; 14-18 December)**

Collection of basic data about party systems. Electoral data, party identities, etc.

Information and data about governments. Measures and indexes.

**Twelfth Week (Lectures 49-53; 11-13 January)**

Party systems and forms of government: combined discussion

**Thirteenth Week (Lectures 54-60; 18-20 January)**

Presentation of preliminary papers